

Serial No. 09/972,448
Response dated February 5, 2004
Reply to Office Action of 11/05/03

Docket No. 5000-4960

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-15 and 17-20 are pending in this application. Claims 4, 11, 13, 17-20 have been previously withdrawn. Claims 2, 16 and 21-23 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 24-27 are added herein. Claims 1 and 3 have been amended. Applicants submit no new matter has been added by way of this amendment. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-identified application, in view of the above amendments and following remarks.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indication that claims 8-10 and 12 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants have added new claims 24-27 herein, incorporating the elements of independent claim 1 and dependent claims 8 (in claim 24); 9 (in claim 25); 9 and 10 (in claim 26); and 9 and 12 (in claim 27), respectively. Therefore, Applicants submit that new independent claims 24-27 are in condition for allowance.

Drawing Objections

The Office Action indicates that the figures in the Application are objected to. Specifically, the Office Action indicates, “reference 108s was not included in Figure 5 as proposed in the drawing corrections filed on 9/23/03”. Applicants submit that the enclosed Fig. 5, addresses the issue raised in the Office Action. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that these objections have been overcome.

Claim Objections

The Office Action indicates that claim 3 has been objected to due to informalities in the claim language. Applicants have amended dependent claim 3 to address the issues raised in the Office Action and further clarify the claim language in dependent claim 3. In light of the amendments, Applicants submit that the objections have been overcome.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 3, 5-7, 14 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Japanese Publication. JP2000-120649A by Yasuchika, et al. (“JP ‘649”).

Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 and the claims directly or indirectly dependent therefrom are patentably distinct from the cited reference.

Amended independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, “

the surface contact portion includes a step portion provided at a leading end portion of the pressure insertion end portion at a leading end side from the serration portion to extend in an axial direction, and an outer diameter of the step portion is equal to an inner diameter of the pressure insertion portion or set between the diameter of the pressure insertion portion and an outer diameter of the serration portion...

Applicants respectfully submit that JP ‘649 does not teach or suggest (1) a step portion provided at a leading end portion of a leading end side of the pressure insertion end portion or (2) an outer diameter of the step portion equal to an inner diameter of the pressure insertion portion.

The Examiner asserts that the marked-up versions of FIGs. 7 and 8 from JP '649 attached to the Office Action disclose, "The surface contact portion A6 includes a step portion A7 provided between a leading end portion A8 of the pressure insertion end portion A3 and the serration portion 7b." Furthermore, the Examiner alleges that the marked-up FIGs. also disclose, "A diameter A9 of the step portion A7 is set between a diameter A10 of the pressure insertion portion A5 and a diameter A11 of the serration portion 7b."

In contrast, Applicants submit JP '649 does not teach or suggest, "a step portion provided at a leading end portion of the pressure insertion end portion...and an outer diameter of the step portion is equal to an inner diameter of the pressure insertion portion...." as recited in Applicants' amended independent claim 1. Applicants respectfully submit that configuring the step portion at the leading-end portion of the pressure insertion end portion, as recited in amended independent claim 1, is patentably distinct from disclosing a step portion A7 provided between a leading end portion A8 of the pressure insertion end portion A3 and the serration portion 7b.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 1 is patentably distinct from JP '649. Similarly, for at least these reasons, dependent claims 3, 5-7, 14 and 15, which are directly or indirectly dependent on amended independent claim 1, are also believed to be patentably distinct from the cited reference. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this ground of rejection.

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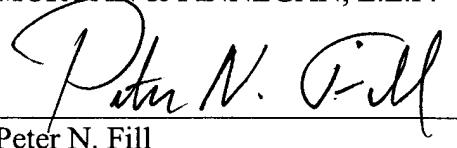
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CONCLUSION

It is now believed that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. In view of these remarks, an early and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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